



LSGI & RILS RESEARCH SEMINAR

The Effects of Ancient Astronomy on the History of Human Development

 **6 MAY 2026 (WED)**

 **4:30 PM - 5:30 PM**

 **Z414, POLYU**

 **ENGLISH**

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Honorary Professor



ABSTRACT

Since the beginning of civilization, our ancestors have been careful observers of the heavens. They knew that the Sun, the Moon and the stars have regular, repeating motions, but their patterns of motions are complicated. By 500 B.C., ancient astronomers knew that the Earth was round, and understood the cause of the phases of the Moon. More than 2000 years ago, the Greek astronomers could accurately determine the sizes of the Earth and the Moon, and the distance to the Moon.

The ancient Greeks created a sophisticated model of the cosmos which can predict the times and directions of sunrise and sunset on any day of the year, at any place on Earth. They could also predict the positions of planets hundreds of years into the future. This system of cosmology was later integrated into the Christian theology that dominated European thinking for over 1000 years. It was not until that 16th century that an obscure clergyman developed a new cosmological theory that destroyed the philosophical foundation of European system of church and state.

BIOGRAPHY

Sun KWOK graduated from McMaster University (B.Sc. 1970) and U. of Minnesota (Ph.D. 1974). He served as assistant professor to professor at the University of Calgary in Canada for 20 years before moving to Taiwan as Director and Distinguished Research Fellow of Institute of Astronomy and Astrophysics of Academia Sinica. In 2006, he was appointed as the first executive Dean of Science at the University of Hong Kong. After a finishing a ten-year term, he took up the position of chair professor of space science and director of Laboratory for Space Research in HKU, until he joined University of British Columbia in 2018.

Sun KWOK's research is in stellar evolution, astrochemistry and astrobiology. He served as the President of the International Astronomical Union Commission on Interstellar Mater between 2012 and 2015, and Commission on Astrobiology between 2015 and 2018. He is the author of several books, including *The Origin and Evolution of Planetary Nebulae* (Cambridge 2000), *Cosmic Butterflies* (Cambridge 2001), *Physics and Chemistry of the Interstellar Medium* (USB 2017), *Organic Matter in the Universe*, (Wiley, 2011), *Stardust: the cosmic seeds of life* (Springer 2013), and *Our Place in the Universe I and II* (Springer 2017 and 2021).

Moderator:

Prof. George Zhizhao LIU, Professor, LSGI, member of RILS

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